



Planning and Development Services
10 N Bemiston
Clayton, Missouri 63105

HOUSING TASK FORCE

MINUTES HOUSING TASK FORCE JUNE 20, 2007

ROLL CALL:

Nicki Herrington, Chair
Michelle Harris, Aldermanic Representative
Joanne Boulton
Andrea Dallas Maddox
Morris Sterneck
Jack Hambene
Joan Gallagher

Absent:

David Hoffman
Alex Berger III
Mary Huebner

City Staff:

Catherine Powers, Director of Planning & Development Services
Jackie Williams, Recording Secretary

The minutes of the May 16th, 2007 meeting were presented for approval. A suggestion was made to change the name of the proposed ordinance from Historic Preservation Ordinance to Residential Historic Preservation Ordinance. The minutes were then approved, as amended.

Joan Gallagher explained that the Codes will be changed from the 2000 Codes to the 2006 Codes. She stated that the City is trying to obtain a new inspector position.

Catherine Powers stated that the position has been included in the Department's budget, but that the budget is not yet adopted. She explained what duties the Nuisance Inspector would be responsible for (i.e. dumpsters, construction sites, complaints, etc.).

Joan Gallagher began a presentation of various buildings in the Moorlands, the first on Westwood. Another building in the area was presented, depicting some property maintenance issues. A photo of another building was presented that was more visually appealing. Photos of other properties in the Moorlands and DeMun were presented. She stated that she saw quite a few “for rent” signs, but that it is common for this time of year.

Catherine Powers commented that about 10 years ago, there was a waiting list to rent an apartment in the Moorlands. She stated that there are other options for people, such as purchasing a condominium rather than renting and that there are other areas with good schools.

Joan Gallagher indicated that the Moorlands and DeMun areas looked worse to her during her tour of the City.

Catherine Powers explained that there are some owners who do not want to re-invest in their properties, for various reasons. She explained that the Code is a minimum, basic code and that even with the City’s local revisions, some items are not considered “violations” (i.e. landscaping). Catherine stated that the City is more successful with larger buildings. She stated that sometimes, it takes years to get a property into compliance. She explained the difference between the requirements of the “property maintenance” code and the regulations for new development. Catherine stated that occupancy inspections are conducted on multi-family (3 or more units) buildings upon change of tenancy as well as annual inspections. The members were informed that the fee for an occupancy permit is \$45.00, unless the unit is occupied prior to inspection approval at which time, the fee increases to \$120.00. Catherine indicated that the majority of the problems are found in the exterior and common areas. She stated that if a building is in court, occupancy permits are withheld. A discussion regarding fines ensued and the possibility of offering tax/financial incentives rather than accessing fines.

A suggestion to increase the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code was made and discussion ensued. Catherine reiterated that the requirements of new construction are more stringent and more specific than that of the Property Maintenance Code.

Catherine Powers stated that she will request this Committee review the new Codes when they are prepared and ready for adoption.

Michelle Harris suggested offering parking incentives to owners/developers as there is already spill-over and no available street parking in the single family neighborhoods.

Catherine Powers indicated that the majority of the buildings in the Moorlands are on a one to one ratio (one space for each unit). She stated that for new construction, there is discussion to increase the parking ratio in the Moorlands. Catherine advised that the Code requires new development to provide 2 spaces per unit for multi-family structures, but that developers are asking that the requirement be changed to 1.3 spaces per unit. She stated that with units containing more than one bedroom, it is likely that the occupants will own more than one vehicle. She stated that there is some room in the City’s Zoning Code to investigate the parking requirement, especially for efficiency and one bedroom units, but not just in the Moorlands, but City wide.

Joan Gallagher commented that better curb appeal draws people in and adds to a better community atmosphere. It was suggested that the new Code better address the issue of façade appearance and the requirement for better aesthetics for front facades.

Michelle Harris asked if the current fines could be reviewed and possibly increased.

Catherine Powers stated that currently, the Code allows up to a \$1,000/day fine, but that the fines could be increased. Catherine advised the members that although the City could recommend a fine of \$1,000/day, the judge does not have to impose it.

The issue of affordable housing was brought up and briefly discussed.

Chairman Herrington asked the members to make some recommendations. The following recommendations were made:

1. Review of the new Codes (form a Sub-committee for this task);
2. Increase fines;
3. Identify problem properties; and
4. Consider a “façade” ordinance (curb-appeal).

Catherine Powers stated the 2006 Codes will be sent to the Board in August or September. She stated the 2006 Property Maintenance Code can be sent to this committee for review.

Jack Hambene asked Catherine to review the complaints to ascertain what complaints are most common.

Catherine Powers indicated that about 50% of the complaints relate to yard problems (i.e. high grass).

A brief discussion ensued regarding single family properties. Catherine Powers informed the members that occupancy permits are not required for single family homes, rather owner occupied or not. She stated that one of the problems with conducting occupancy inspections on single family homes, besides the fact that at least one more inspector would need to be hired, is that the Property Maintenance Code does not address major issues or define items that would need to be looked at when selling/purchasing a home.

Chairman Herrington asked to go over the meeting schedule. She indicated that there will be no meeting in July. She stated the next meeting will take place August 15th, with the September meeting taking place on September 19th. She stated this committee can most likely wrap up October or November.

Being no further comment, the next meeting of the Housing Task Force has been scheduled for August 15th, at 7:00pm.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:40 p.m.

Recording Secretary